

# AFRICAN FIRST LADIES HEALTH SUMMIT

Leadership *for* Health 2009



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2009

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## AFRICAN FIRST LADIES SUMMIT ENDS WITH AGREEMENT ON LEADERSHIP, DEPLOYMENT OF EXPERT TEAMS TO AFRICA

**LOS ANGELES** – Closing a two-day summit of 14 African first ladies that mixed Hollywood stars and top experts on health policy and development, organizers announced late Tuesday, April 21, that a majority of the women had agreed to strengthened leadership roles in their countries and to work with teams of U.S.-based specialists in the coming months.

Summit organizers U.S. Doctors for Africa and African Synergy said they would spend the coming weeks assembling teams of experts to travel to Africa and collaborate with individual first ladies on ways to launch new efforts and improve existing ones to address issues such as basic healthcare for women and children, HIV/AIDS, and malaria on the continent.

“These are some of the gravest problems faced by the African continent, needlessly claiming the lives of millions of people. To solve these problems we need the kind of African leadership announced today, as well as the engagement of a global partnership of experts,” said Ted Alemayhu, founder of U.S. Doctors for Africa.

“There is tremendous work to be done, but we have taken the first steps and in the coming months more steps will be taken on the long road to ending the preventable, tragic deaths of so many African mothers and children.”

Participating in the summit were the wives of leaders from Angola, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Swaziland, and Zambia. Several other African countries sent delegations. The summit also featured addresses by California First Lady Maria Shriver, as well as Sarah Brown, wife of UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Brown called for a renewed focus on maternal health and hosted a “working tea” with all of the first ladies.

Noted Hollywood actors joined portions of the gathering, including: Sharon Stone, Danny Glover, Jessica Alba, Rosario Dawson, Diane Lane, Robin Wright Penn, Maria Bello, Blair Underwood, Joely Fisher, Kristin Davis, and Camryn Manheim. A Beverly Hills gala on Tuesday night featured performances by Patti Austin and Natalie Cole.

Partners in the summit included a range of groups with long track records of working to improve healthcare in Africa. Summit partners (listed alphabetically) included: Africare, AllAfrica.com, Chevron, Dalberg, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Exxon Mobil Corporation, General Electric, Global Health Council, ONE, Pfizer, Procter & Gamble, Qiagen, RAND Corporation, UCLA’s Center for International Medicine, Until There’s A Cure, Vital Voices Global Partnership, White Ribbon Alliance, Women Deliver, and the World Health Organization.

Photographs and video clips from the summit are available for use by the news media via our website at <http://leadershipforhealth.org/media/>.

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